

TESTIMONY OF

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BEFORE THE

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**HEARING ON “STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO SECURE CRITICAL RESOURCES AND
SUPPLY CHAIN”**

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Thank you for inviting me to testify.

My central message today is simple: securing America’s critical resources and supply chains requires not only resources, but relationships.

Much of what America needs to accomplish will require action by the executive branch and other committees of Congress. But this Committee possesses some of our most important tools of economic statecraft. Trade policy can help us build durable partnerships with countries that possess the minerals, energy, and other strategic resources America needs.

We should be using those tools in Africa, Central Asia, and the Caspian region.

Let me begin with Africa. Africa possesses extraordinary reserves of critical minerals and will become increasingly important to American supply-chain security. China understands this and has spent decades building commercial relationships and infrastructure across the continent.

AGOA remains one of America’s most important economic tools in Africa. I strongly support the Committee’s work to extend AGOA through 2028, and I hope Congress will ultimately provide a longer-term extension that gives businesses and our African partners greater certainty. AGOA is not simply a development program. It is an instrument of American economic and strategic engagement.

We should apply the same strategic logic to Central Asia.

I urge this Committee and Congress to graduate Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan from Jackson-Vanik and grant them permanent normal trade relations with the United States. I also believe Congress should consider graduation for Azerbaijan.

Jackson-Vanik was an important legislative accomplishment of the 1970s. It used trade policy against communist countries that restricted their citizens' freedom to leave and was motivated in particular by Soviet restrictions on Jews seeking to emigrate.

Communism was a great evil, including in its repression of people of faith. This Committee's efforts in 1974 were right for their time.

But Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are not the Soviet Union. They have been independent countries for thirty-five years, and successive U.S. administrations have certified them as compliant with Jackson-Vanik's freedom-of-emigration requirements since 1997.

The question before Congress today should therefore be an affirmative one: **Does continuing to apply Jackson-Vanik to these countries advance American interests?** I believe the answer is no.

Kazakhstan is the world's largest producer of uranium. It also has major resources of chromium, copper, zinc, and other minerals, while producing more than two million barrels of petroleum liquids per day.

Uzbekistan is a major uranium and gold producer, has significant copper resources, and is a major natural-gas producer. With nearly 40 million people, it is an increasingly important economic and strategic partner.

China and Russia are their neighbors. That geography will not change. But these countries want more choices—more American investment, more trade, and a larger American presence.

If we are serious about competing with China for critical minerals, energy, and resilient supply chains, we cannot ask Central Asian partners for a twenty-first-century economic relationship while continuing to treat them under a twentieth-century law designed for the Soviet Union.

But possessing strategic resources is only half the equation. **Critical minerals are only strategic if you can get them to market.**

That is why the Middle Corridor matters. I have argued for several years that the United States and the West should help develop the Trans-Caspian trade corridor. Central Asian countries need more routes to the outside world—not fewer.

The Middle Corridor links Central Asia across the Caspian through Azerbaijan and onward toward Europe. It can become an increasingly important east-west artery for minerals, energy, manufactured goods, and digital connectivity. Azerbaijan is a strategic bridge connecting Central Asia and the Caspian to western markets.

President Trump's Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity—TRIPP—creates another opportunity to strengthen this east-west architecture. Together, TRIPP and the Middle Corridor can strengthen routes linking Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and Europe.

Energy and digital connectivity should be part of the same strategy. Azerbaijan already plays an important role in moving Caspian energy westward. A future Trans-Caspian gas connection could give Turkmenistan another route to western markets. Fiber-optic cables, railways, ports, pipelines, and roads can all give the region more choices and greater connectivity with the West.

Secure supply chains require secure relationships and multiple routes to market. We cannot diversify simply by identifying deposits on a map. We need durable partnerships and infrastructure to move resources, goods, energy, and data.

We can and should continue candid conversations with our partners about human rights. But we now possess more targeted tools, including the Global Magnitsky Act, for addressing those concerns. Jackson-Vanik should not substitute for those tools.

There is also a question of diplomatic dignity. At some point, continuing to treat independent countries under a trade framework created for the Soviet era stops looking like leverage and starts looking like inertia.

This should not be a partisan issue. Republicans and Democrats have supported stronger relationships with Central Asia, and Members on both sides of the aisle have supported Jackson-Vanik graduation. I hope this Congress can turn that bipartisan interest into law.

We should not ask Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan to choose between the United States, China, and Russia. We should make sure they have choices—and make the American choice more attractive.

Mr. Chairman, Congress cannot change Central Asia's geography. This Committee cannot create another uranium deposit or build a pipeline across the Caspian.

But this Committee can use American trade policy to strengthen the relationships on which secure supply chains ultimately depend.

Africa and Central Asia present different challenges, but the strategic principle is the same: America needs to show up economically in regions that possess resources critical to our future. Extending AGOA and graduating Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan from Jackson-Vanik are practical ways for this Committee to advance that goal.

Jackson-Vanik worked for the challenge it was created to address. Today, American interests call for a new chapter in our relationships with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

It is time to end Jackson-Vanik for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and build the twenty-first-century partnerships America needs.

Thank you.